

News Sheet



December 2016/January 2017

*The Happiest of Christmases
and the brightest of New Years
to each and everyone of you
from all of us at GSO.*

Image courtesy of The Grapvine, Box 459

“Our Singleness of Purpose – The Cornerstone of A.A.”

Our singleness of purpose is undoubtedly one of the principal reasons the Fellowship has endured as a safe haven for the suffering alcoholic.

Since that afternoon in 1935 when Bill W. and Dr. Bob first met and talked for hours, drunks have been sharing their experience, strength and hope with one purpose alone: to help themselves and other alcoholics recover through A.A.'s Twelve Steps.

On the face of it, the idea is simplicity itself. Traditions Three and Five state it clearly: “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

“Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

A.A. is for alcoholics and people who think they might have a drinking problem, and as a Fellowship we do one thing only – share our program of recovery. Yet time and again, members, groups, and A.A. as a whole have encountered roadblocks as they sought to live out these most basic and essential of our traditional principles.

All Twelve Traditions were hammered out over years of trial and error, and for the most part, they were shaped less by the founders' inherent wisdom than by the recognition that they, as well as future generations, needed safeguards against their own character defects. In the formative years, power drivers among the early members would have diverted A.A.'s energies into hospitals, alcohol education, and other grandiose projects. Yet in tandem with their grandiosity ran a constant fear of losing their newfound sobriety.

In Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Bill wrote that the early members, “scared witless that something or somebody would capsize the boat and dump us all back into the drink,” devised membership rules to protect themselves. “Our Foundation office asked each group to send in its list of ‘protective’ regulations. The total list was a mile long. If all those rules had been in effect everywhere, nobody could have possibly joined A.A. at all, so great was the sum of our anxiety and fear. “We were resolved to admit nobody to A.A. but that hypothetical class of people we termed ‘pure alcoholics.’

... Maybe this sounds comical now. . . . Well, we were frightened. . . . After all, isn't fear the true basis of intolerance? How could we then guess that all those fears were to prove groundless?”

More than half a century later, those words still do not sound comical. With the influx of prospective members who suffer from other problems, our faith that those fears are groundless is tested daily.

As A.A. has become increasingly well known and respected in the eyes of the public, many other organizations have adapted our Twelve Steps to recovery for a wide variety of addictions and problems. One result has been a blurring of the distinction between A.A. and other fellowships – “a drug is a drug,” we hear from newcomers who are not alcoholics but believe (often because well-meaning friends of A.A. have told them so) that A.A. meetings are the place for those with any addiction.

The guidelines for that situation are clear. In a 1958 Grapevine article, “Problems Other Than Alcohol,” Bill W. wrote: “Our first duty, as a Society, is to insure our own survival. Therefore we have to avoid distractions and multipurpose activities. . . . Sobriety – freedom from alcohol – through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps, is the sole purpose of an A.A. group. . . . We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our A.A. groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone.”

How to handle dually addicted alcoholics who persist in talking about other problems in meetings is a murkier issue. In that same article, Bill writes about “one of the best A.A.s I know” – a man who had been doing drugs for years before joining A.A., “but prior to that he had been a terrific alcoholic. . . . Therefore he could qualify for A.A. and this he certainly did.” Should groups today insist that dually addicted newcomers confine their discussion to alcoholism alone? Should we require prospective members to identify their “primary addiction” before participating in a group? Or can we simply welcome these men and women and trust that they will come, listen, and find their own way?

In a presentation at the 1983 Conference entitled “Are we helping the dually addicted?” delegate Dyanne G. described the way her group welcomed her. “I will continue to thank

God that I came into an A.A. group spiritually fit enough that its members did not find it necessary to censor my conversation or actions in order to protect themselves. I did talk about drugs, and I used a lot of four-letter words to do it!

My group allowed me the dignity to choose to change these things and the freedom to do it when I could, not when they thought I should. . . .

My group seems to have no trouble sticking to our single purpose, which is to carry the message to still-suffering alcoholics, however damaged and confused they are in the beginning There is a fine line between upholding our singleness-of-purpose Tradition and limiting or restricting our membership."

"The day A.A. appears to be rejecting people who may be alcoholic, we will begin to die. What good will it do us if, while we are defending our 'rights,' A.A. is destroyed?"

The "druggies" and other disruptive influences will not go away – they are one of the consequences of our own success. Ironically, some of our good friends in the field of alcoholism compound the problem because they believe our program works better than any thing else for a variety of addictions.

Good public information work and cooperation with professionals is part of the answer, but ultimately we cannot control what others do – only how we ourselves react. If we respond with a defensive flurry of restrictions, will we actually depart from our singleness of purpose by turning away alcoholics who have not yet recognized their problem?

In 1986, retiring G.S.O. general manager Bob P. gave the Conference closing talk. He said in part: "I echo those who feel that if this Fellowship ever falters or fails, it will not be because of any outside cause. . . . it will be simply because of us It will be because we have too much fear and rigidity and not enough trust and common sense. . . ."

"If you were to ask me what is the greatest danger facing Alcoholics Anonymous today, I would have to answer: the growing rigidity that is so apparent to me and many others. The increasing demand for absolute answers to nit-picking questions. Pressure for G.S.O. to 'enforce' our Traditions. Screening alcoholics at closed meetings. . . . And in this trend toward rigidity, we are drifting further and further

away from our co-founders. Bill, in particular, must be spinning in his grave, for I remind you that he was perhaps the most permissive person I ever met. One of his favorite sayings was, 'Every group has the right to be wrong,' he was maddeningly tolerant of his critics; and he had absolute faith that faults in A.A. were self-correcting."

Compilation of extracts from Box 459, Vol. 50, No.2 / April-May 2004

THIS IS A CLOSED MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

This is a closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

In support of A.A.'s singleness of purpose, attendance at closed meetings is limited to persons who have a desire to stop drinking.

If you think you have a problem with alcohol, you are welcome to attend this meeting.

We ask that when discussing our problems, we confine ourselves to those problems as they relate to alcoholism.

(The 1987 General Service Conference made this statement available as an A.A. service piece for those groups who wish to use it.)

PEACE PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

APPROVED FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS/ONE DAY EVENTS		
ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2016		
20th-23rd April 2017	60th All Ireland Convention	The Salthill Hotel, Promenade, Galway (091 522711). Theme: A New Freedom
FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS IRELAND		
DATES	AREA	VENUE
11th-13th November 2016	Kerry Area 51st Annual Convention	The Brandon Hotel, Tralee, Co. Kerry. Theme: Three Legacies.
25th-27th November 2016	Mayo Area Convention	Hotel Westport, Westport, Co. Mayo
6th-8th January 2017	Galway West Area Convention	Galway Bay Hotel, Galway City. Theme: Gratitude through Fellowship
13th-15th January 2017	Area 14 Convention	Amber Springs Hotel, Gorey, Co. Wexford. Tel: 053 9484000, Booking Ref: 156769.
20th-22nd January 2017	Waterford Area Conventions	Woodlands Hotel, Dunmore Road, Waterford. Tel: 051 392700
23rd-26th February 2017	Limerick City Area Convention	The Castletroy Park Hotel, Limerick City. Theme: Love and Tolerance of Others
3rd-5th March 2017	Sligo/North Leitrim Area Convention	The Clarion Hotel, Sligo
ONE DAY EVENTS IN IRELAND		
DATES	AREA	VENUE
Sat. 5th November 2016	Cork City Area Celebration of 70 Years of AA in Ireland	Ambassador Hotel, Military Hill, Cork (City). Workshop at 3pm, Open Meeting at 7pm.
Sat. 12th November 2016	Belfast Area Day of Gratitude	Corr's Corner Hotel, 315 Ballyclare Road, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim, BT36 4TQ. Phone: (028) 90849221
Sat. 12th November 2016	Roscommon/South Leitrim/Athlone Area Day of Gratitude	Hannon's Hotel, Roscommon Town. Registration from 2pm

Visit us at: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

APPROVED FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS/ONE DAY EVENTS		
Sun. 13th November 2016	Area 14 70th Anniversary Day of Gratitude	The Talbot Hotel, Wexford Town
Friday 18th November 2016	A Celebration of 70 years of AA in Ireland	The Green Isle Hotel, Dublin. Tel: 01 4593406. Registration from 6pm.
Sat. 19th November 2016	Area 7 (Coolock Group) Day of Gratitude	70th Anniversary Day of Gratitude. St. Brendan's Parish Centre, Coolock Village, Dublin 5.
Sat. 19th November 2016	Area 10 and Area 8 Joint Day of Celebration	St. Michaels House, Tallaght Road, Templeogue, Dublin 6W. Starts at 11am, Buffet Dance at 9pm. '70 Years of Gratitude'
2016	Gratitude	Town, Co. Donegal
Sat. 26th November 2016	Derry Area Day of Gratitude	Waterfoot Hotel, Caw Roundabout, Waterside, Derry, BT47 6TB. Hotel: 028 71345500
FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS ABROAD		
DATES	COUNTRY	VENUE
27th-29th January 2017	8th Annual Lanzarote Convention	Barcelo Lanzarote Resort Hotel, Avenida del Mar 5, Costa Tegui, 35508 Lanzarote, Canary Islands. Theme: 'Carrying the Message'. (See www.aa-europe.net for flyer/info)
24th-26th March 2017	Malta 2017 AA Convention	Seashells Resort at Suncrest, Qawra Road, Qawra, Malta. See www.aamalta.org.mt for flyer.
30th March-2nd April 2017	51st Highland Gathering (Scotland)	Jury's Inn Hotel, Millburn Road, Inverness, Scotland (flyer on our website)

The News Sheet is intended as an aid to SERVICE throughout the Fellowship in Ireland. Your suggestions as to form and content of the News Sheet will be especially welcome.

Service Structure of The Fellowship in Ireland

Each Group is entitled to send two GSRs to Area

Each Area send four members as Delegates to Intergroup

Four Delegates, known as Conference Delegates, represent their Provincial Intergroup at Conference

AA Conference includes The Board, The Board Secretary, the four Intergroup Delegates and Intergroup Secretary together with our two World Service Delegates

The Board itself is made up of four Alcoholics Anonymous Trustees and three non-Alcoholics Trustees.

A.A. Groups

Area

Intergroup

Conference

Board

Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an upside-down organization because, as the structure chart shows, the Groups are on top and the Trustees at the bottom. Bill W. wrote in Concept 1 "The AA Groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world service...." Then in Concept 2, Bill made it clear that the Groups "delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world service and thereby made the Conference... the actual voice and effective conscience for our whole society". Bill's early vision was of a worldwide structure. However, the Conference structures in countries outside of the U.S./Canada evolved as autonomous entities.



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